UNITE
NATION

A

General Assembl

Distr.
GENERAL

A/51/157
6 June 1996
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: RUSSIA

Fifty-first sessio
Item 71 of the preliminary list

GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMEN

Note verbale dated 4 June 1996 from the Permanen Representative of Ukraine to the United Nation addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the United Nations presents it compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour t transmit the text of the statement by the President of Ukraine, Mr. Leonid Kuchma, marking the completion on 1 June 1996 of the process of withdrawing strategic nuclear weapons from the territory of Ukraine. The Mission would be grateful if this letter and its annex were circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under item 71 of the preliminary list.

* A/51/50.

Annex

Statement by the President of Ukraine marking the completion on 1 June 1996 of the process of withdrawing strategic nuclear weapons from the territory of Ukraine

On 1 June 1996 the process of withdrawing strategic nuclear warheads from the territory of Ukraine to the Russian Federation for subsequent destruction under the supervision of Ukrainian observers was completed. The Ukrainian Stat thereby demonstrated to the world its commitment to the concept of universal nuclear disarmament and its desire to take practical steps to bring mankind closer to an era in which all the peoples of the planet will be able to live without the threat of nuclear annihilation.

There was a time when the Ukrainian people had to fund the exhausting nuclear-arms race of the cold war period at the expense of their own prosperity and economic development. Therefore, in declaring itself to be the owner of the nuclear weapons inherited from the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics which were located in its territory, Ukraine viewed these weapons not in terms of real military strength but primarily as a material asset which would partially offset the losses it had incurred. Independent Ukraine has never posed a nuclear threat to mankind.

It was precisely this consideration which guided the Verkhovna Rada when it proclaimed in the Declaration of State Sovereignty of July 1991 that Ukraine would adhere to three non-nuclear principles: not to accept, not to manufacture and not to acquire nuclear weapons.

This decision was amplified in all subsequent documents and practical steps taken by Ukraine in respect of nuclear disarmament; hence the withdrawal of the final nuclear warhead from Ukrainian territory is the logical outcome of that decision, and also provides convincing evidence of the consistency and predictability of our policy.

This historic event marks the timely and complete fulfilment of our State's commitments under the terms of the Trilateral Statement by the Presidents of the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the United States of America, issued on 14 January 1994 (see A/49/66-S/1994/91, annex), and represents a significant contribution by Ukraine to the disarmament process. However, this process cannot be one-sided; it must be supported and supplemented politically and practically by other countries, primarily the nuclear countries. The complete elimination of the nuclear weapons located in Ukrainian territory presents a unique opportunity to carry into effect the idea of a nuclear-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe stretching from the Black Sea to the Baltic. The establishment of such a zone will encourage the development of a climate of trust between countries in the region and will significantly reduce the risk of new lines of division appearing across the continent of Europe.

We in Ukraine are very grateful for the assistance we have been given in eliminating strategic nuclear weapons. In meeting the international commitment it has taken on in this sphere, Ukraine is encountering a number of problems

which it is not in a position to solve on its own. Therefore, in voluntarily renouncing the third-largest nuclear capability in the world, we have a right to expect that assistance to Ukraine will also be forthcoming once we have finally complied with the provisions of the Trilateral Statement by the Presidents of the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the United States of America, issued on 14 January 1994. We are counting on long-term cooperation in this sphere in the interests of all mankind.

The people of Ukraine, who have endured the lethal consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, are fully aware of the real threat of disaster which nuclear weapons pose to mankind. Ukraine is convinced that it has made the right choice in respect of its non-nuclear status and urges other States, primarily the nuclear States, to do likewise and make every effort to ensure that nuclear weapons are removed from the face of our planet at the earliest possible opportunity and for all time.